

# *Children's Administration 2004* Performance Report

*Public and Legislative Accountability for Child Safety, Permanency, and Well-Being*



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*Washington State*  
Department of Social  
& Health Services



## Message from the Assistant Secretary

I am pleased to present the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration eighth annual performance report.

The administration went through a process of intense self-reflection in Fiscal Year 2004 as the result of a variety of external and internal evaluation processes including the federal Child and Family Services Review, Braam Lawsuit, Gomez Child Fatality Review and our own painstaking audit of practices, procedures and stewardship.

The findings were at the same time difficult and hopeful, both giving us pause and motivating us toward increased efforts and better outcomes for children and families.

We discovered, yet again, that our greatest asset lies in our workforce. Those nearly 2,400 dedicated men and women work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for Washington's most vulnerable citizens and their families. Children's Administration personnel have demonstrated tremendous resiliency amid challenging times and even greater resolve this past year, to strengthen efforts toward improving practice, increasing accountability, and ultimately, bettering lives.

We have seen incredible innovative work at the regional level to address issues affecting children and families within specific geographic areas and we have experienced strengthened collaboration with our tribal and community partners. These partnerships as well as the continued support of our legislators and the public will be vital to system reform.

Amid these and other successes, we are very aware of multiple findings demonstrating that the child welfare system in Washington state must take timely, decisive action to improve on every level. We must embark upon a "new day". We must improve child safety and permanency, family engagement and child and family well-being. We must enhance services to adolescents, kinship and resource family supports, and utilization of community consultants. We must increase service array and continue work toward quality improvement. We must improve our system and strengthen its foundation if we hope to serve children and their families well and restore public trust.

This new day is more than theory or speculation; the *Kids Come First Phase II (KCF II)*, *Safe Kids in Healthy Families* comprehensive plan has been thoughtfully conceived and developed by those representing every aspect of child welfare in Washington state and beyond. It is both the compass by which we will navigate and the litmus test by which we will be judged over the next seven years.

The Fiscal Year 2004 annual report represents a transition, a bridge between where we have been and where we are going as an administration. It is reflective of the performance of this past year and displays the KCF II road map for our intended destination.

I am proud and honored to be a part of this work and to work among so many champions for children. All of us rely upon all of you to help ensure that every child is a safe child, every family is a healthy family and ultimately, that the community of Washington citizens is stronger and safer as a result.

Uma Ahluwalia, MSW, MHA  
Assistant Secretary

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